



Southeast New Mexico Fire Prevention Team

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wildfires in Southeast New Mexico

Alamogordo, NM (May 23, 2006) – Several wildfires ranging in size from a few acres to 20,000 acres have started in the last week due to lightening strikes during recent thunderstorms.

Twenty-three fires that totaled approximately 35,000 acres were reported and quickly responded to by crews from the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, New Mexico State Forestry and numerous rural fire departments.

Resources used included the Smokey Bear Hotshot, Sacramento Hotshot, and Mormon Lake Hotshot crews, as well as firefighters from around the country. Eight loads of fire retardant were dropped and two single engine air tankers, one large air tanker, a helicopter, several engines, dozers, and water tankers were also used during the past week.

High temperatures and strong winds have made conditions favorable for wildfires and the current restrictions on the Lincoln National Forest will be in effect until conditions are such that they can be lifted. Several inches of rainfall would be needed to change the current status of extreme fire danger. Because of these conditions, the Lincoln National Forest implemented a Stage IV Emergency Area Fire Closure order on May 23, 2006.

While much of the Lincoln National Forest is closed to recreational use, the surrounding towns and villages welcome visitors for sightseeing, shopping and special events. Contact the local chambers of commerce and arts councils for the city of Alamogordo, villages of Cloudcroft, Ruidoso, Ruidoso Downs, Mayhill, Sacramento, Weed, Timberon, Capitan and Queen to obtain a calendar of events.

For more information on current fire restrictions on public lands in New Mexico and Arizona, call toll-free 1-877-864-6985 or visit www.fs.fed.us/r3/fire.

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